



HIGH-LEVEL SEMINAR

**STRENGTHENING WOMEN'S
PARTICIPATION IN PEACE
PROCESSES: WHAT ROLES
AND RESPONSIBILITIES
FOR STATES?**

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The report reflects the discussions held at the seminar and UN Women extends its appreciation to all the participants, whose knowledge and expertise contributed to the success of the meeting. The report was prepared by Mireille Affa’a Mindzie and Magda Cardenas. It was edited by Leigh Pasqual.

The views expressed herein are illustrative of the discussions amongst the participants, however, they do not necessarily represent the views of the United Nations, UN Women or any individual

Photos: Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (Italy)

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BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES



The adoption by the United Nations Security Council of resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent resolutions facilitated the development of the women, peace and security (WPS) agenda. This agenda, over time, has established and reinforced a global framework to promote women's active and effective participation in peacemaking and peacebuilding. In addition, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) adopted a series of resolutions that aim to strengthen the role of mediation in the peaceful settlement of disputes, conflict prevention and resolution. These resolutions endorsed the need for mediation to

incorporate the WPS agenda.¹ Through these policies, the UN and its Member States have committed to promoting women's rights and their inclusion in peace processes, as well as engendering peace negotiations by ensuring that gender equality issues are considered during all phases of peace processes.

As the international community and women across the world prepare to mark the 20-year anniversary of the adoption of UNSCR 1325 (2000), Member States, regional organizations and the UN are stepping up efforts to accelerate results that

¹ United Nations Department of Political Affairs, *Guidance on Gender and Inclusive Mediation Strategies* (United Nations, 2017).



demonstrate transformative implementation of the WPS agenda. Member States hold the primary obligation to advance the WPS agenda, including women's representation in peace negotiations. National action plans (NAPs) on women, peace and security illustrate States' resolve to translate formal commitments to the WPS agenda into action, including by facilitating women's greater inclusion at all levels of decision-making in national, regional and international conflict prevention and resolution institutions and mechanisms. As of December 2019, 83 countries (or 42 percent of UN Member States) had adopted a NAP on women, peace and security.

As part of the implementation of its third NAP in accordance with UNSCR 1325 (2000)², and a flagship initiative of its mandate on the Security Council, Italy launched the Mediterranean Women Mediators Network (MWMN) in Rome in October 2017. The MWMN brings together a multigenerational group of women mediators and mediation experts from Mediterranean countries who have actively engaged in the strengthening of

women's participation and influence at all levels of peace processes.

Similarly, other countries have established regional networks of women mediators. Finland and Norway, together with Denmark, Iceland and Sweden, belong to the Nordic Women Mediators (NWM) network established in 2015. The United Kingdom launched the Network of Women Mediators across the Commonwealth in 2018. The African Union-led Network of Women in Conflict Prevention and Mediation or FemWise-Africa was established in 2017, and the ASEAN Women for Peace Registry in 2018. These networks point to important efforts to advance and support women's meaningful participation throughout the duration of peace processes, from conflict analysis to preventive diplomacy, and to peacemaking and post-conflict peacebuilding and reconciliation.

From left to right: Ms. Asa Regné, Deputy Executive Director, UN Women, H.E. Ms. Emanuela Claudia Del Re, Deputy Foreign Minister, Italy, Ms. Leymah Gbowee, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate and Member of the UN Secretary-General's High-Level Board on Mediation, and Ambassador Sebastiano Cardi, Director General for Political Affairs and Security, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Italy

² Italy's Third NAP in accordance with UN Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) covered the period 2016-2019.

Against this background, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), in collaboration with the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, convened a high-level seminar on *Strengthening Women's Participation in Peace Processes: What Roles and Responsibilities for States?* in Rome, Italy, on 3 and 4 December 2019. The seminar brought together approximately 130 participants from 60 countries including: members of the MWMN; representatives from other regional networks of women mediators; Member State officials; women peacebuilders; and representatives from regional and international organizations, academia and think tanks.

The meeting examined the role of Member States in advancing the full and effective participation of women in mediation and peace processes, including within the context of their support to regional networks of women mediators. Specifically, the meeting aimed to:

- Assess the normative, political, technical and funding opportunities, challenges and prospects that exist for Member States to step up their support – both nationally and through regional and international organizations – to networks of women mediators to enhance women's participation in peace processes;
- Share best practices and lessons learned on advancing women's participation in peace processes and the implementation of peace agreements, including through support to civil society organizations;
- Discuss the existing and potential tools to strengthen monitoring and reporting on Member States' efforts to increase the participation of women, including women mediators, in peace processes; and

- Identify and agree on concrete commitments that Member States could adopt and implement towards more gender-inclusive peace processes and peace agreements ahead of the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of UN Security Council resolution 1325 in 2020.

The two-day seminar, which was organized as an evening opening event followed the next day by a technical discussion, was jointly opened by Italy's Deputy Foreign Minister, H.E. Ms. Emanuela Claudia Del Re, and UN Women Deputy Executive Director and Assistant Secretary-General, Ms. Asa Regnér. A keynote address was delivered by Ms. Leymah Gbowee, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate 2011 from Liberia and Member of the UN Secretary-General's High-Level Board on Mediation. The opening event also saw the launch of a documentary on the MWMN and a high-level panel discussion on States' support to women in making, building and sustaining peace from the local to global level.

During the technical discussion, speaker panels addressed a range of issues including:

- the persistent gaps to women's meaningful participation in peace processes and how to address these;
- the regional and international policies and practices that have proved most effective, and the existing strategies available for Member States to advance women's participation in peace negotiations and the implementation of peace agreements; and
- the potential of regional networks of women mediators to effect transformative change, and the opportunities for Member States, the UN and regional organizations to make concrete use of these networks' available expertise.

SEMINAR REPORT STRUCTURE

First, this report reflects the main arguments presented during the meeting on the persistent barriers to women's meaningful participation in peace and mediation processes, and the opportunities that exist to remove them. Specifically, seminar participants discussed challenges related to limited political will; the link between women's underrepresentation in politics and their marginalization in peace processes; the complex balance between women's representation and promoting gender equality; and the barriers to sustainable civil society involvement.

Second, the report highlights perspectives and lessons learned that representatives of the UN, Member States, regional organizations, and civil

society shared on how to enhance women's meaningful participation in peace processes. Two strategies were emphasized: the design of inclusive peace processes, and the role of regional networks of women mediators in bridging peace processes across tracks. The case studies of Colombia, Syria and Cyprus are also included, offering insights on some successful strategies to increase women's participation.

Finally, the report describes the key policy recommendations that emanated from the seminar, with a view to addressing ongoing barriers to women's participation; and using innovative and comprehensive strategies to achieve more gender-responsive peace processes.

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